

## Warren County Board of Supervisors

**Committee:** Social Services

**Date:** May 24, 2013

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**Committee Members Present:**

Supervisors Loeb  
Kenny  
Bentley  
Strainer  
Wood  
Sokol

**Committee Member Absent:**

Supervisor Westcott

**Others Present:**

Representing the Department of Social Services:  
Suzanne Wheeler, Commissioner  
Julie Montero, Fiscal Manager  
Christian Hanchett, Adoption and Foster Care  
Supervisor  
Deanna Park, Director, Countryside Adult Home  
Kevin Geraghty, Chairman of the Board  
Paul Dusek, County Administrator  
Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board  
Frank Thomas, Budget Officer  
Supervisors Conover  
Girard  
Mason  
Taylor  
Thomas  
Don Lehman, *The Post Star*  
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist

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Mr. Loeb called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 10:32 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Suzanne Wheeler, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS), who distributed copies of her agenda to the Committee members; a copy of the agenda is also on file with the minutes.

Commencing the Agenda review, Commissioner Wheeler announced the Team Player for the month of May was Carrie Wright, Caseworker in the Foster Care Unit and the Team Leader was Kelly Barker, Principal Social Welfare Examiner for the Temporary Assistance (TA)/Welfare to Work (WTW)/Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)/ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Reception Units; however, she said, neither one was able to attend the meeting today. She noted that the Agenda included praising comments from Ms. Wrights' and Ms. Barkers' coworkers.

The next item on the Agenda, Commissioner Wheeler continued, was the Information and Education piece and this month Christian Hanchett, Adoption and Foster Care Supervisor, would be providing an update on Berkshire Farms and the Foster Care program.

Mr. Hanchett reminded the Committee members of the decision made a couple of years ago to utilize an outside vendor for all foster care placement; however, he said, they realized it was costing the County more to use the contracted agency for this program and the outcomes were not significantly improving. He advised the County re-implemented its' own foster care placement program and began recruiting and training its' own foster parents.

Mr. Hanchett referred to the Foster Care Comparison included in the Agenda packet, noting that currently the County had 17 children placed in homes and the attachment reflected the cost to the County compared to the cost for Berkshire placements, as well as the associated daily savings. He pointed out the County was saving \$706.35 per day by having the children placed in County foster homes. He added that their staffing levels had not changed. Mr. Hanchett remarked another significant savings had been realized by placing the children in the Managed Care Program instead of under Medicaid; thereby providing health care through a private provider with the County paying a monthly premium, which was less money than having a Medicaid case open on a child that was placed with Berkshire. He further stated that Berkshire charged the County \$20.84 daily Medicaid rate per diem for each child whether the child required medical attention or not, totaling \$129,312.20 a year. He mentioned that in October 2011, Warren County had zero active foster homes and currently had 18 homes, with continual recruitment and training. Mr. Hanchett acknowledged the County had 76 children in its' care with 15 of those children placed in Berkshire homes. He explained they did still contract with Berkshire under certain circumstances, such as not separating siblings or children requiring specific settings or school districts due to special needs which was determined by Family Court. He apprised the County had finalized 14 adoptions last year, which was a high number for a county this size.

Mr. Bentley commented that Berkshire Farms was represented at many hockey games this past season to recruit foster homes and Mr. Hanchett responded there was a lot of competition to recruit foster homes. Mr. Hanchett added DSS had recently commenced a program through the local schools for recruitment, and they also attended many events in the community.

Mrs. Wood and Mr. Sokol entered the meeting at 10:42 a.m.

In response to an inquiry relative to how many children could be placed in one home, Mr. Hanchett advised each home underwent an individualized home study to determine the number of children that could be placed there and it was driven by a number of factors, such as the number of bedrooms or children in the home.

Paul Dusek, County Administrator, commended Commissioner Wheeler and Mr. Hanchett for taking the initiative to reduce costs to the County by re-implementing the Foster Care Program. Commissioner Wheeler credited the Accounting Department, as well, for their assistance in monitoring where the funds were going for this program and the reimbursements being received. Mr. Hanchett noted the response and dedication of the DSS staff had also made the transition possible.

Commissioner Wheeler advised the next Agenda item pertained to the Foster Youth Drivers License/Learner Permit Policy. She recognized that all local Departments of Social Services in New York State, under the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (NYS OFCS), were required to provide a variety of services that would assist children in foster care to make a successful transition to independent living and responsible adulthood. She stated that in conjunction with the County Attorney's Office, they had developed a policy to assist appropriate age and eligible foster children to obtain a learner's permit and take driver education classes.

As an informational item, Commissioner Wheeler informed they had paid a staff member \$2,287 as a result of a grievance regarding unpaid back benefit time resolved by the County Attorney. She noted she may seek Committee approval for a transfer of funds later in the year, if necessary.

Continuing the Agenda review with Action Items, Commissioner Wheeler presented a request for a transfer of funds in the amount of \$7,000 due to the extension of time the temporary HEAP staff were needed this season to process applications.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mrs. Wood and carried unanimously to approve the request for a transfer of funds as outlined above, and to refer the same to the Finance Committee. A copy of the Transfer of Funds form is on file with the minutes.

Commissioner Wheeler advised the next items were requests for training and she listed them as follows:

- Request for three Caseworkers to attend mandated CPS (Child Protective Services) Core Training in Albany, New York on June 4-July 13, 2013; June 17-21, 2013; July 1-3, 2013; and July 15-19, 2013;
- Request for two Caseworkers to attend Protective Services for Adults New Worker Institute Part I Training in Albany, New York on June 9-13 and June 24-27, 2013; and
- Request for one Fraud Investigator to attend the NY Welfare Fraud Investigators Association 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Training Seminar in Callicoon, New York on June 3-5, 2013.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the requests for training as outlined above. The Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention forms are on file with the minutes.

Commissioner Wheeler pointed out the Overtime Report was included in the Agenda and reflected a slight decrease from last year at this time. She added the Budget Analysis was also included for the Committee's review.

Mr. Kenny opined there was a significant number of people on public assistance and he assumed many of them were able-bodied. He questioned if they could be mandated to perform road side pick-ups. Commissioner Wheeler recalled an issue being raised by the Union regarding Welfare to Work (WTW) individuals doing any work that a staff member could do. Mr. Strainer stated he thought there were liability issues with that idea, as well. Mr. Dusek expounded it would be worth researching and could be a great initiative for the County. The consensus of the Committee was for Commissioner Wheeler and Mr. Dusek to further research the possibility of individuals on public assistance being mandated to perform road side pick-ups and report back to the Committee with their findings.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Deanna Park, Director of Countryside Adult Home, who distributed copies of her agenda to the Committee members; a copy of the agenda is also on file with the minutes.

Ms. Park began the Agenda review and noted Items 1 and 2 were requested by the Payroll Department to accurately reflect the facility's staffing schedule. Item 1, she said, was a request to delete the position of Institutional Aide #5 and to create the position of Institutional Aide/Part Time #4, #5 and #6, 8 hours per week, with a salary not to

exceed \$4,843; thereby amending the Department's Table of Organization. She added Item 2 was a request to delete the position of Institutional Aide #9 and to create the position of Institutional Aide/Part Time #7, 12 hours per week, with a salary not to exceed \$7,265; thereby amending the Department's Table of Organization. She pointed out both requests would be budget neutral.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve Items 1 and 2 as outlined above, and to refer the same to the Personnel Committee. Copies of the resolution request forms are on file with the minutes.

Next, Ms. Park requested to fill the vacant position of Cleaner, annual salary of \$23,706, due to resignation and to backfill any positions resulting from promotion. She commented the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) required one staff hour per resident for housekeeping services and this would meet that requirement. She stated there would be a cost savings of \$457.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Cleaner as outlined above, and to refer the same to the Personnel Committee. A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.

Ms. Park advised the next item was a request to renew the contract with Mahoney Notify-Plus, Inc. for fire alarm system inspections, commencing August 1, 2013 and terminating July 31, 2014, for a lump sum amount of \$975. She noted there was an increase in the cost of the contract from last year.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to renew the contract with Mahoney Notify-Plus, Inc. as outlined above, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the June 21, 2013 Board meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Ms. Park requested an increase in the Personal Allowance Fund (Patient Fund) from \$600 to \$1,000 to be used exclusively for withdrawals from residents personal allowance accounts. Ms. Park explained that all residents were afforded the opportunity to set up an account with the facility, which was placed in a checking account; however, she said, a portion of the funds were kept at the facility for the residents to withdraw from.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to increase the Personal Allowance Fund as outlined above, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the June 21, 2013 Board meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Under Old Business, Ms. Park apprised Item 1 was a request from Mr. Westcott for the County Administrator to provide a comparison report for future costs of Countryside Adult Home. She noted that she was unaware of the status of the requested report. Mr. Strainer reminded the Committee members that the Meal Site had recently been relocated to Countryside Adult Home and that needed to be considered and included in the aforementioned analysis. Following a brief discussion, it was determined the item should remain on the Pending Items list.

Ms. Park referred to the Topics for Discussion portion of the Agenda and reported they had 12 hours of overtime for the past two pay cycles which was an increase of 60.95 hours overall from last year's figures. She informed the current census was 43 residents, 16 men and 27 women. She added there were 4 referrals received this month: 1 of which was pending, 1 was admitted, 1 decided to remain in their home and the other required nursing home level care. Also this month, she continued, there were 3 admissions and 1 resident was discharged. Mr. Bentley acknowledged the census of 43 residents was the highest it had been in a long time.

There being no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Bentley and seconded by Mr. Strainer, Mr. Loeb adjourned the meeting at 11:19 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Livingston, Second Deputy Clerk